

Fiscal Year 2002 Annual Report

Longview-Kelso-Rainier MPO
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation
Planning Organization

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Lead Agency: Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments

1. MPO Activities

A. Longview-Kelso-Rainier MPO Area

Transportation Planning staff from the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) worked on a variety of issues affecting the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area during Fiscal Year 2002.

• **SR 432 Access**

CWCOG Staff, local elected officials and private sector stakeholders met with congressional staff during FY 2002 to secure funding for developing a future plan for modernizing SR 432 Access. These meetings culminated with a luncheon presentation and field trip for Secretary Doug MacDonald to tour the area with congressional staff and elected officials at the state and local level. These efforts resulted in securing a \$1 million grant from the federal Transportation Community System Preservation Pilot Program (TCSP). The MPO Area TIP was amended to place the funds into the State's TIP with the assistance of the Highways and Local Programs office at WSDOT. CWCOG Staff also worked closely with SW Region staff to develop the contract and related documents to get the project underway. A project assistant is scheduled to come on board in July 2002, with the RFP out to the consultant community by late summer and work underway January 2003. The first effort will be an 8-Point Added Access Decision Report for the I-5/SR 432/Talley Way interchange. Subsequent efforts will be to develop a rail plan for the industrial area, which would determine the viability of developing a bypass to relieve congestion along the SR 432 (Industrial Way) corridor.

CWCOG staff has continued to work with congressional staff to secure funding for the short-term improvements outlined by the SR 432 Route Development Plan. The two projects requested for funding are the continuation of the two-way left turn lane and implementation of access management for a portion of the corridor and a double left turn onto the Lewis and Clark Bridge (SR 433) at the Industrial Way/Oregon Way intersection. Estimated at \$1.75 million, these two low-cost projects will provide much-needed capacity for the coming years as the planning efforts and environmental documentation work are completed for the major improvements for this critical network. Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) funds were transferred from the Allen Street Bridge project for signal improvements at Tennant Way and 3rd Avenue to improve the movement of trucks through the ramp and signal. FMSIB Board members agreed to keep the money in the Kelso-Longview area to fund this project, which had been highly ranked, but not funded through the last round of the program's funding cycle.

B. SR 4/411 Urban Area Congestion Management Plan

CWCOG staff continues to assist the City of Kelso in updating its subarea plan for West Kelso, as a part of the city's comprehensive plan update. The circulation system envisioned by the SR 4/411 plan is included as the future transportation network for the area. Staff worked closely with city staff and with Eastern Washington University students in the development of future strategies for the area. Staff has also updated congressional staff on the project with a request for funding assistance. Redevelopment activities continue along the corridor and city staff is implementing elements of the plan, as needed, along with access management strategies.

H. Cowlitz Transit Authority Community Public Transit Needs Assessment

Staff has been asked to assist the Cowlitz Transit Authority in assist them in developing a strategic approach to planning for their future. In response, staff has embarked on a needs assessment for the agency, starting with a review of existing public transit agencies throughout the state similar in size and operations to Cowlitz Transit Authority. Future work will include developing a broad-based futures committee to determine the best sources of funding and the type of services a countywide public transit agency could provide for the citizens of Cowlitz County.

D. Lewis and Clark Bridge Replacement/Re-decking Activities

Staff has been working closely with the southwest region of WSDOT on certain elements of the \$30 million complete deck replacement for the Lewis and Clark Bridge. The elements include: traffic management plan, communication plan, emergency services plan, and the WSDOT project delivery management plan. Staff has attended all public meetings and workshops on both sides of the river and has also participated in most of the management meetings.

E. Access Management Plan Development

The cities of Longview and Kelso, Cowlitz County and SW WSDOT are working with CWCOG, as the lead agency, completed the development of the access management draft standards/guidelines and draft model ordinance for adoption by the cities and county for the MPO urbanized area. The ordinance includes a complete bibliography of sources, complete graphic display and electronic format ease of use for both the cities, WSDOT and the county in implementing the plan. The City of Longview's planning commission is hosting a workshop for local developers and the ordinance is on track for adoption on both Longview and Kelso during Fall 2002.

Coordinating closely with the Access Management Plan is the SR 4 Safety Corridor Project. Staff participated with a variety of agencies in developing a plan for addressing the safety deficiencies in the corridor. Washington State Traffic Safety Commission worked closely with community agencies, including the school districts, police departments, Washington State Patrol, sheriff's department, and public works staff for both Kelso and Longview, as well as Cowlitz County. Additional grants obtained by the Longview Police Department will be used for additional traffic enforcement activities along the 17-mile safety corridor. State Route 4 has been targeted for implementation of access management techniques because of the high accident rates, the high number of driveway access points and the mixture of residential and commercial land uses.

F. Environmental Impact Statement: North Kelso to Martin's Bluff Rail Corridor Project

WSDOT Rail Office staff has been working with CWCOG staff in the formulation and development of the Environmental Impact Statement for the addition of a third rail along the Burlington-Northern-Santa Fe mainline for a 14-mile segment through Cowlitz County. Staff has been working with WSDOT by

assisting with their public awareness program, making arrangements for meeting with elected officials and local staff and by working to support federal funding for the construction of the project through the High Speed Rail Investment Act. The two staffs are working together to develop a strategic plan for joint mitigation of environmental impacts for both the rail expansion and future construction of the I-5/SR 432 interchange. These two projects impact the same set of wetlands and other sensitive areas at the confluence of the Columbia, Cowlitz and Coweeman rivers.

G. Regional Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation

Staff conducted regular meetings of RPACT, which serves the MPO area, as well as Wahkiakum and Cowlitz counties.

H. FY 2003 Unified Planing Work Program

Staff completed the MPO elements of the FY 2003 UPWP, as required.

I. MPO Area Transportation Improvement Program

Staff completed the 2002-2004 TIP, as required.

*Rosemary Brinson Siipola, Transportation Planner/Manager
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments*

2. Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization

A. SWRTPO Board of Directors

The Board of Directors continues to meet on a quarterly basis. During 2002, the Board decided to meet around the five-county area, so the following schedule was set up:

February:	Cowlitz County
May:	Lewis County
September:	Pacific/Wahkiakum Counties
November:	Grays Harbor County

A review of this change will be on the scheduled for the November 2002 meeting, to determine if this should be continued into 2003. Esther Gregg, Wahkiakum County Commissioner, will be wrapping up her two-year term as chair and it will be Grays Harbor County's turn to provide a chair for the board for the 2003-2004 term.

B. Discovery Institute/Cascadia Corridor

The Cascadia Corridor program staff continue to be strong partners in the development of high speed passenger rail service through out counties. Based on the analysis completed last year, the Cascadia Corridor is also working closely with our region to enhance freight mobility on all transportation modes in our region: trucking, rail, and marine.

C. SWRTPO Regional Transportation Plan

Staff worked to incorporate WTP elements into the development of the SWRTPO Regional Transportation Plan. The goals and policies of the plan have begun their initial review. The document will be completed during FY 2002.

D. Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration Activities

Staff worked closely with local, state and federal officials in developing a transportation infrastructure plan for the Lower Columbia River bi-state area. CWCOG staff continues to work closely with Cowlitz, Pacific, Wahkiakum and Clatsop County, Oregon in the planning efforts for the bicentennial activities.

E. Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Application

Staff from Grays Harbor Council of Governments and CWCOG worked to develop a two-county transportation, as required for the JARC program, for Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties. The purpose of the plan is to delineate the transportation deficits in the area of service to working poor affected by the welfare reform program. The Coastal Community Action Program, located in Aberdeen, is applying for three vans to be used in both counties to provide vanpool service for low-income workers. These vans will be used to provide transportation to jobs and training centers for these workers.

F. Lewis County

CWCOG staff continues to work with Lewis County on an as-needed basis. CWCOG staff has been a member of the LaBree Road Interchange re-examination work and has also participated in the development of the new analysis for the North County Interchange proposal. Staff assisted the Destination Packwood organization in the development of their Scenic Byway Grant application for US 12. Staff continues to work with WSDOT staff and county agencies to develop a work program for a route development plan for the US 12 corridor.

G. Grays Harbor Council of Governments Activities

(submitted by Vicki Cummings, Executive Director)

(i) **Oversight and Administration**

Administration of the Grays Harbor County region of the SWRTPO includes the preparation and administration of budgets, contracts, quarterly and annual reports.

GHCOG staff has worked with the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments to administer RTPO programs, prepare annual budgets, submit quarterly and annual reports and develop the Grays Harbor County region section of the *Unified Planning Work Program* containing RTPO elements.

Staff has:

- ✓ attended MPO/RTPO/WSDOT coordinating meetings and workshops,
- ✓ convened SWRTPO meetings to address Grays Harbor County regional, state and federal transportation issues as needed,
- ✓ provided a forum for public involvement in the regional transportation process through open workshops and meetings, as well as conduct public outreach and education regarding the goals and objectives of the regional transportation planning process,
- ✓ been active in tracking and troubleshooting local projects,
- ✓ serves as liaison between local entities, SWRTPO and WSDOT.

• **Regional TIP**

- ✓ Staff provided assistance in preparing and collecting the Grays Harbor County Region Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP), compiling them into a regional TIP and forwarding them to WSDOT for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP).
- ✓ Individual and regional TIP's were mapped in AUTOCAD.
- ✓ Assisted WSDOT in providing a workshop on new STIP software for local governments in the County.

• **TEA21/STP**

- ✓ Council of Governments staff provided the coordination and administration of the TEA21-STP/Enhancements process for the Grays Harbor County region.
- ✓ Individual assistance in project development and technical writing for STP/Enhancement applications was provided.
- ✓ Staff troubleshoots project development and assists in obtaining match monies

(ii) **Projects**

• **Grays Harbor Vehicular Ferry**

Council of Governments staff is responsible for the administration and oversight of the Grays Harbor Vehicular Ferry Project. Staff sponsors meetings, provides public information, maintains records, and tracks and records grant related funding.

Staff continues to monitor the progress of the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) feasibility study in Ocean Shores. This study will determine whether the COE dredges and maintains the Ocean Shores marina mouth which is a required activity for the development of a vehicular ferry from Ocean Shores to Westport. A formal reply is expected by the end of July 2002. Once a

determination is made by the COE, the Vehicular Ferry Interlocal Agency will reconvene to determine an appropriate course of action.

- **Grays Harbor Transit Authority**

Staff assisted the Grays Harbor Transportation Authority with their annual update to the Transit Development Plan.

- **JARC Grant Opportunities**

Staff researched and wrote the Grays Harbor segment of the transportation plan element of the Job Access and Reverse Commute grant for the Coastal Community Action Program.

- **Multi-Modal Planning**

Over the past year, staff has continued to analyze freight rail expansion in order to enhance economic development and to review the potential for passenger service to the Washington coast.

Staff is also exploring aviation-related elements of transportation planning and their associated funding cycles.

Identification and enhancement of pathways within the region continues to be a focal point through the development of partnerships with other agencies, i.e., Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, National Park Service, US Forest Service, State Department of Fish and Wildlife and local municipalities.

- **Showcase**

Staff convened a welcoming committee for the incoming Secretary of Transportation. The purpose of the event was to showcase current projects and demonstrate regional needs.

H. Pacific Council of Governments (PCOG) Activities

- PCOG Technical Advisory Committee on Transportation continues to hold meetings prior to the monthly Board meetings, when necessary.
- Annual STP project selection continued via an Interlocal Agreement adopted for distributing federal funds through a formula-based process.
- Continued assistance, as needed, in Lewis and Clark Bicentennial transportation-related activities.
- Continued assistance in the development of local agency six-year TIPs.

(iii) Conferences

CWCOG Staff attended the following conferences and workshops during FY 2002

- Western Intermodal Planning Group Annual Meeting, Phoenix, Arizona September 2001
- Freight Mobility Workshop, Seattle, Washington, October 2001
- National Conference on Aging and Mobility, Scottsdale, Arizona, March 2002
- Aesthetic Design Workshop, Seattle, Washington, April 2002
- TRB Transportation and Economic Development National Conference, Portland, Oregon, May 2002

- Discovery Institute Congestion Pricing Workshop, Bellevue, Washington, May 2002
- WTS Gala and Annual Meeting, Seattle, Washington, January 2002
- WTS Amtrak Forum, April 2002

(iv) Assistance

CWCOG staff assisted the WSDOT Heritage Corridors Program staff in the selection of the FY 2003 Scenic Byway Grant proposals to be forwarded to FHWA.